



RE: S. 2313, *Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance Act*

Dear Senator:

The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (SHEA) represents physicians, infection prevention and control professionals, public health experts, hospitals, and healthcare epidemiologists. We write today to communicate our endorsement of S. 2313, the “Strategies to Address Antimicrobial Resistance (STAAR) Act,” bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) on November 6, 2007. The legislation currently has five co-sponsors.

Antimicrobial resistance is a serious patient safety and public health issue. Although initially recognized in hospitalized patients, antimicrobial-resistant pathogens are increasingly being found in other settings such as long-term care facilities and in the community in individuals with no recognized contact with a healthcare facility. Several such organisms first appeared in other parts of the world and have been imported into the United States; others originated here. Regardless of their origins, such organisms can be and are transmitted from person-to-person by direct and indirect contact and, in some specific cases (such as drug-resistant tuberculosis) by the airborne route.

Considerable public concern has arisen from media attention on methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections. A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (October 17, 2007) estimated that more than 94,000 people are infected and nearly 19,000 die annually from MRSA in the United States. Our organization acknowledges and takes seriously the public health burden presented by MRSA. Yet, we believe that additional focus needs to be brought to bear on other pathogens such as drug-resistant tuberculosis and resistant gram-negative bacilli whose treatment is even more of a problem for physicians and for patients who become infected with highly resistant pathogens.

The STAAR Act will greatly enhance the U.S. ability to respond to the antimicrobial resistance problem. The bill provides comprehensive strategies to strengthen federal antimicrobial resistance surveillance, prevention and control, and research efforts. Most importantly, the legislation authorizes new funding and strengthens coordination within Department of Health and Human Services.

The STAAR Act includes a comprehensive set of specific actions to address our current limited abilities to monitor, treat, and most importantly prevent the development and transmission of microbial pathogens that threaten the health of all Americans and increase the cost of healthcare delivery.

As a medical, healthcare, and public health organization dedicated to patient care and safety, as well as public health in general, we urge prompt passage of the STAAR Act. Should you have any questions, please contact Robert J. Guidos, JD, director of public policy and government relations for the Infectious Diseases Society of America, at 703-299-0202 or rguidos@idsociety.org.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Brennan, MD
President
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America